

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Citizen Participation to Provide Key Role in Salisbury's  
Establishment of Dixonville Cemetery Memorial and Master Plan**  
*Community Engagement to Support Collective Vision for Dixonville Site*

Salisbury, NC\_August 18, 2010 – The City of Salisbury and the recently appointed Dixonville Cemetery Memorial Task Force are requesting citizen participation in the establishment of a cemetery memorial for the Historic Dixonville Cemetery, 210 Old Concord Road. Interested parties and individuals are asked to attend a community meeting on Thursday, August 26, from 5 pm to 7 pm at the First Calvary Baptist Church Fellowship Hall, 400 South Long Street. The session will allow attendees the opportunity to offer personal feedback regarding the history of the Dixonville Cemetery and to contribute personal impressions and visions for the development of a cemetery memorial and additional streetscape designs. An overall master plan for the Dixonville Cemetery site will be created, along with a lasting record of known site burials.

One of the city's oldest African-American cemeteries, the Dixonville Cemetery, was deeded to the City of Salisbury in 1874. Local historian Betty Dan Spencer has documented 477 burials that have occurred at the Dixonville site since 1914, however it is believed that many burials took place prior to the practice of official record-keeping. An existing headstone dates to 1851 and marks the burial site of Mary Valentine, wife of renowned local barber William Valentine. Valentine, a free man of color, was born in North Carolina and lived in Salisbury for a number of years. Prominent in the affairs of the black community, Valentine was one of the trustees for Dixonville Cemetery and the African M. E. Zion Church, now known as Soldiers Memorial A. M. E. Zion Church. Valentine worked from his shop on the second floor of the Kluttz Building at Innes and Main Streets and was recognized in 1874 by the *Carolina Watchman* as one of the best barbers in the state.

Mayor Susan Kluttz, speaking on behalf of the Salisbury City Council provides, "The Dixonville Cemetery is an important city landmark in our East End Neighborhood where much of the historic development pattern and identifying structures were lost to urban renewal during the 1960s. A dedicated committee of neighborhood advocates and cemetery preservationists enhanced the Dixonville site with streetscaping and the placement of a roadside historical marker during 2009." Kluttz shares that soon after the marker installation, the creation of a Dixonville Cemetery memorial and the establishment of a site master plan became a 2010-2011 Salisbury City Council Goal. "This project is important to the East End Neighborhood, but also of vital importance to our entire City. At this day and time, we should not have unmarked graves in Salisbury;

the individuals buried here truly deserve to be recognized and honored.” The Mayor notes that it is imperative for neighborhood residents and relatives to assist with identification of these individuals so that they may be properly acknowledged. “Through creation of our Dixonville Cemetery Memorial Task Force and the adoption of a resolution of legislative intent to establish the scope and outline of the cemetery project, our Salisbury City Council further emphasizes an ongoing commitment to community and economic development, neighborhood revitalization, and historic preservation.”

The Dixonville Cemetery Memorial Task Force was appointed by the Salisbury City Council in June of this year. Committee members from throughout the local community include: Fred Evans, Floyd A. Kerr, III, William Peoples, Emily Perry, Eleanor Qadirah, Sara Robinson, Sandra Russell, Betty Dan Spencer, Ronald Woodruff, Sr., and William H. Woodruff. City of Salisbury staff appointed by city council to support the goals, outcomes, and strategic plans of the task force include: Joe Morris, Janet Gapen, and Lynn Raker of the Community Planning Services Department; Linda Davis, Cemetery Division; and Gail Elder-White, Parks & Recreation. Senior Planner Janet Gapen notes, “As staff liaisons, it is our genuine desire to support and carry out the collective vision of the Dixonville Cemetery Memorial Task Force. By assisting the committee with the planning, fundraising, and installation of a memorial at the Dixonville site, we can properly acknowledge and honor those individuals interred at the site. Establishment of a phased Dixonville Cemetery site plan will ensure that future enhancements include a consistent blend of historic preservation with park and open space enrichment.” Gapen has served as staff liaison to the City of Salisbury’s Historic Preservation Commission for over five years.

As part of the public input process, oral history will be collected and recorded during the August 26 community meeting. Residents and former residents of the Dixonville and East End areas of Salisbury are particularly encouraged to attend. Other individuals with strong ties to the area are invited to share memories and recount stories about the Dixonville Cemetery and surrounding neighborhood. These contributions and impressions of the past will further assist in guiding plans for the cemetery memorial and help to shape future site improvements. For more information regarding the public input session slated for August 26 at 5 pm, please contact Janet Gapen at 704-638-5230. Light refreshments will be served during the meeting.

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